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## POPULARIZING MODERN NEW TESTAMENT SCHOLARSHIP

Among the semi-popular books about the Bible few have been written upon the New Testament from the modern point of view. Biblical scholars have sometimes seemed reluctant to apply the methods of historical criticism to the New Testament. But the New Testament will always be the center of Christian interest in the Scriptures, and there are general readers who will welcome books that make available to the layman the illuminating results of present-day research.

The little book by Professor Scott on *The New Testament Today*<sup>1</sup> deserves a wide reading. Scholarship and reverence for the truths of Christian experience here walk hand in hand. The author vindicates the right of the New Testament against those who attack it as an outgrown book of long ago. The New Testament still breathes the freshness of the new movement. When read with simple responsiveness to spiritual and moral fact it opens our eyes to a Christianity that was not a doctrine but "a new feeling toward God and a new attitude toward life." Our knowledge of contemporary life and religion in Palestine and in the Graeco-Roman world throws a new light on the forms in which the truth was expressed, and shows us the Christian religion adapting itself to its spiritual environment and yet maintaining its identity in its victorious conflict with the powerful religions already in the field. We of the twentieth century are bidden to turn for suggestion to the first Christian writings and to regard their unity in diversity, their continuity in progress. Our world has found no substitute for religion, whether in scientific advancement or in social enthusiasm. The field is open for a Christianity that claims as its own the current sense of brotherhood and takes advantage of the present recognition of the spiritual, the mystical, and the moral, an apostolic Christianity that combines catholicity of experience and expression with simplicity of faith.

In *The Approach to the New Testament*<sup>2</sup> Dr. Moffatt carries us farther into the processes of historical criticism. He finds in the New Testament a healthy book "in its emphasis on truth, on vital energy, and on the realities of life," a book that reflects the varieties and changes in a manifold, developing movement. The writings that composed it were gradually elevated to a level with the accepted Hebrew Scriptures.

<sup>1</sup> *The New Testament Today*. By Ernest Findlay Scott, D.D. New York: Macmillan Co., 1921. 92 pages. \$1.00.

<sup>2</sup> *The Approach to the New Testament*. By James Moffatt, D.D., D.Litt., Hon. M.A. (Oxon.). London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1921. 240 pages. \$3.00.

The Old Testament exerted an influence both on Christian experience and on the record of Christian experience. Once certain Christian writings had been made into a New Testament, they were soon invested with the sanctity and authority already attaching to the Old Testament. Over against the traditional dogmatic and allegorical interpretation of the Bible, Dr. Moffatt urges the claims of the historical method, applying it by way of example to the Gospel story of the Feeding of the Five Thousand, and to Paul's allegorical argument in Galatians. In these representative instances he seeks to show the significance of the gospel narrative and the purpose of Paul's citation from the Old Testament. The historical student aims to recover the original fact free from bias or interpretation on the part of the recorder. Far from being merely negative in his deliverances he saves many men from a haunting doubt on the essential facts of early Christianity. He owns the limitation of his field, and grants to the philosopher and the mystic their rights in interpretation. We need them all, philosopher, mystic, and historian, if we are to understand the facts and the record of early Christian life. Teachers and students of history will be glad of this book, which meets them on their own ground, commands their intellectual confidence, and interprets to them anew the original documents of our Christian faith.

The author of *The Contents of the New Testament*<sup>1</sup> has essayed the difficult task of writing an introduction to the New Testament that may be used in the public schools. In general the well-grounded conclusions of modern scholarship are accepted and stated in simple form. But in the use that is made of the Fourth Gospel in the account of the life of Jesus, and in one instance in the otherwise excellent interpretation of the Book of Revelation (p. 199), the traditional attitude appears. In other places the writer speaks with a confidence not shared by all New Testament students, as when he asserts that Peter neither spoke nor wrote Greek. More surprising are the occasional infelicities of sentence structure. But as the work of an able, open-minded layman the book is of real significance. It succeeds in throwing into clear relief the main points in the New Testament, and gives many fresh touches that vivify the presentation. It should do good service as a manual for classes in church or school.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Contents of the New Testament*. By Haven McClure, B.A., secretary, English Council, Indiana State Teachers' Association. New York: Macmillan Co., 1921. ii+219 pages. \$1.50.